WORKSHOP DESIGN

Overview

This workshop is designed to optimize the process of designing, developing, implementing, sustaining, and building a very effective Peer Supported Professional Development (PSPD) Team tailored specifically for your school setting.

Materials

This workbook contains materials related to specific Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and Teacher Teams (TT) and how to combine the content and change process to insure your PSPD team results in a viable program embraced by all key stakeholders.

Core Content

This program addresses the elements that drive every successful peer supported professional development team:

PURPOSE

ORGANIZATION

CONTENT

ASSESSMENT
CREATING A LEARNING FOCUS

**Instructions:** fill in the requested information in each of the three columns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Goals for the Workshop</th>
<th>Your Challenges Back Home</th>
<th>Your Questions or Concerns</th>
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Building Peer-Supported Professional Development

PURPOSE
**SCHOOL NEEDS ANALYSIS**

**Instructions:** Identify what is missing in your school and be specific in identifying the impact on students and other key stakeholders, e.g., student achievement (core or 21st century knowledge and skills, social/emotional growth, civic responsibility, and/or post-secondary preparation and access).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT IS MISSING IN YOUR SCHOOL?</th>
<th>WHAT IS THE IMPACT?</th>
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BENCHMARKING OTHER PROGRAMS: EXERCISE #1

Instructions:

1. Conduct a jigsaw reading of articles by Dufour, Barth, Schmoker and SEDL with the focus being an understanding the purpose of a PLC, and the context in which PLC’s are successful.

2. Fill in the chart below for your assigned reading/schools, and be prepared to share your observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>CONTEXT: WHAT WAS MISSING?</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
CHALK TALK EXERCISE: APPLYING KEY ELEMENT #1 PURPOSE, TO YOUR SCHOOL

Reflect on the chalk talk exercise and consider how program emphases can be crafted to address the needs identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Emphasis</th>
<th>Addresses students' needs in what ways?</th>
<th>Reflects the needs of the school community in what ways?</th>
<th>Consensus reached - priority?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMPROVING TEACHER CRAFT KNOWLEDGE</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEACHER OBSERVATION TO IMPROVE PRACTICE</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEVELOP ESSENTIAL LEARNING CURRICULA</td>
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<tr>
<td>CREATE COMMON ASSESSMENTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXAMINE STUDENT WORK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PROGRAM PURPOSE: Based on the consensus you reach about program emphasis using the, what specific purpose(s) will your PSPD program be designed to meet?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Program Purpose</th>
<th>Priority value:</th>
<th>Addresses students’ needs in what ways?</th>
<th>Reflects the needs of the school community in what ways?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Essential, non-negotiable</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Important, but negotiable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Experimental and negotiable</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**DRAFT STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

**Instructions:** Based on your analysis of your students’ and school community’s needs, and your team’s consensus re: purposes(s) and priorities, draft your “First Cut” statement of program purpose. (The “Second Cut” and “Third Cut” will be addressed shortly.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF PURPOSE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. First Cut:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>B. Second Cut:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>C. Third Cut:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
FINAL EVALUATION OF YOUR DRAFT PURPOSE STATEMENT

**Instructions:**

1. On your own, respond to each question.
2. Compare your results to those of your team members.
3. Use the items the team agrees is either a “no” or “somewhat” as input in creating your “Third Cut” draft purpose statement in the chart on page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The statement reflects commonly held beliefs of the school community concerning student needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. You can directly relate your PSPD purpose to student and school community needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The way you have stated the PSPD purpose will be easily understood by all stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The statement reflects the consensus of your team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The statement will have a positive emotional impact on those who read it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. If the PSPD as implemented will bring the purpose statement to life, it will result in meaningful changes, versus just tweaks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. The statement reflects an approach to meeting student needs that can’t be met in any other way that is more efficient or effective.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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# SCHOOL CULTURE EVALUATION

**Instructions**
- Read each dimension. Put a circle around the number that reflects where you started; a square around where you are now; and a triangle around where you would like to be (set a date for this, e.g., one, two, or three years from now)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUB-OPTIMAL CLIMATE/ PRACTICE</th>
<th>STARTING POINT</th>
<th>CURRENT STATUS</th>
<th>BEST CLIMATE/PRACTICE</th>
<th>BARRIER ELIMINATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Top-down Leadership</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>a. Collaborative/Distributed Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Activity Oriented - Little Ownership for Change/Results</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Results Oriented - Ownership for Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Fire-Fighting/Ad Hoc Decision Making</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>c. Planful &amp; Strategic Decision Making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Communication Deficits</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>d. Inclusive, Transparent, &amp; Rapid Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Adult-Centered Environment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>e. Student-Centered, Personalized Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Low Student Accountability/Ownership for Learning</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>f. High Student Accountability/Ownership for Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Low Stakeholder Involvement</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>g. High Stakeholder Involvement, to Include Parents, Community, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Teaching</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>h. Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Course Success Focus</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>i. Post-Secondary Readiness &amp; Success Focus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Reliance on One Type Of Assessment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>j. Balanced Multiple &amp; Authentic Assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Individual Teacher Effort</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>k. Collaborative Teaming - Prof. Learning Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Your Kids &amp; My Kids</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>l. Our kids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building Peer Supported Professional Development

ORGANIZATION
### Cultural Shift:
There is a multidimensional cultural shift that occurs in well-performing PPD team’s, for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult-centered environment</th>
<th>Student-centered environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content coverage</td>
<td>Demonstration of proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual teacher effort</td>
<td>Collaborative teaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privatization of practice</td>
<td>Open sharing of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External training</td>
<td>Job-imbedded learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequent summative assessments</td>
<td>Frequent formative assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessments to reward &amp; punish</td>
<td>Assessments to inform &amp; motivate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliance on one type of assessment</td>
<td>Balanced assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remediation</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your kids &amp; my kids</td>
<td>Our kids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMPASS POINTS

WEST: Paying Attention to Detail
Likes to know the who, what, when, where, why before acting

NORTH: Acting
Let’s do it!
Likes to act, try things, plunge in

EAST: Speculating
Likes to look at the big picture, the possibilities before acting

SOUTH: Caring
Likes to know that everyone’s feelings have been taken into consideration, that their voices have been heard before acting

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**COMPASS POINTS**

Directions:

1. Using a Compass Points worksheet, individually circle the “direction” you believe accurately describes the way you work within a group. No discussion.

2. Separate into four groups: go to groups associated with North, South, East and West according to the direction you’ve chosen. As a group you will need to answer the following questions, chart your responses on paper, and report back to the full group.

3. Reconvene as a large group. Take turns sharing your responses to the full group. Members can feel free to ask questions or make some remarks, keeping in mind that this time should be used mostly to listen and learn, not discuss relative merits of the different styles.

Questions:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What are the strengths of your style? (List 4 adjectives)</th>
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<tr>
<th>What are the limitations of your style? (List 4 adjectives)</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What style do you find the most difficult to work with?</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do people need to know about you so that we can work together more effectively?</th>
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</table>
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Do you think you were in the right group? How could you tell?

2. What ratio of the different compass points would make an effective and productive team?

3. What would happen if a team were missing one of the directions?

4. What would happen if a team were made up of only one direction?

5. How can you know if this information will be useful in your work as a team?

6. How can a team balance having fun, getting work done, and allowing for personal styles, too?

7. Is there a connection between the way you approach your regular job and your personal style of working in groups? Are they similar or different?

8. How about in your relationships with family/friends?
GROUND RULES

In order to have an effective team, the members of the team need to talk about what makes a team work productively.

To begin this process, each individual should write down five “ground rules” that he or she feels are necessary behaviors in order to work productively. Some questions to help team members construct their lists are found on the following page. After five minutes of writing:

- Appoint one member of the team as the scribe.
- Each individual reads ONE item from his or her list. Go around in a circle, with as many circuits as necessary to have all the Ground Rules listed.
- Ask for any clarifications, if necessary.
- After the team’s list is complete, discuss the following:
  - Can we collapse similar thoughts into one statement?
  - Can everyone abide by the Ground Rules?
  - Will any of the Ground Rules be difficult for the group to follow? If so, discuss them until one of the following decisions is made: to keep them on the list with a notation of objection, to remove them, or to try them for a specified amount of time and then re-visit them.
- Reflect: What does the team do when a Ground Rule is not being followed?

Check in on the Ground Rules frequently. Note any that are not followed well for attention in the next work session. Being sure that ground rules are followed, refining them, and adding to or subtracting from the list is important to ensure trust within the group. While you are working, refer to the Ground Rules whenever they help the group process. (If one person is dominating, for example, it is easier to refer to a Ground Rule that says, “Take care with how often and how long you speak,” than to ask someone directly to stop dominating the group.)

Using Ground Rules:

- Write them as a team
- Review them often
- Post them in meeting rooms
- Confront behaviors that violate stated rules

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• Revise them as needed
• Give new members opportunities for input
• Evaluate group performance

Questions to Assist in Establishing Ground Rules:
Think about any group or team in which you have had a positive experience to determine their common team practices.

• Have time parameters been established?
• How will interruptions when a member is speaking be handled?
• What are the ground rules for confidentiality?
• How will decisions be made?
• How will all members’ participation be encouraged?
• Does the team value individual participation?
• How does the team indicate its expectations of all members?
• How does the team deal with members who do not contribute to the work of the team?
• How will the team work at continual learning and improvement?
• How will the team recognize improvement?
• Will the team celebrate success?

OUR TEAM’S GROUND RULES:
SOME SUGGESTED ROLES OF TEAM MEMBERS:

Team members may decide to rotate team roles; it is healthy for the continuous development and success of effective teams for members to experience different roles over time.

Facilitator:
- Keeps team members on task
- Ensures that every member has a chance to contribute
- Ensures that no team member is attacked
- Keeps the team's energy focused on problem solving and decision making

Team Members:
- Focus on the task
- Clarify ideas when necessary
- Share knowledge
- Contribute points of view
- Listen to other members’ points of view
- Take responsibility for participation
- Share responsibility for accomplishing outcome

Timekeeper:
- Supports the work of the facilitator
- Enables team to remain focused on issues and outcomes, not time
- Monitors team members’ air time
- Alerts member to time spent on discussing and/or resolving issues

Recorder:
- Records data, information, decisions, issues for next agenda
- Provides context for the team’s work at the beginning of each meeting
- Creates and disseminates written record of the meeting
- Provides the information that the team needs to reinforce its accomplishments

Team Members:
- Focus on the task
- Clarify ideas when necessary
- Share knowledge
- Contribute points of view
- Listen to other members’ points of view
- Take responsibility for participation
- Share responsibility for accomplishing outcome
REFINING YOUR “ORGANIZATION” DESIGN

Instructions
1. Using the four charts below, fill in the cells as appropriate by answering the following question: “How will you organize your PPD team program to best support the school community in meeting your stated purpose of the program?”
2. Use your responses to the prior exercise to inform your responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design option</th>
<th>Description of process or structure</th>
<th>+ Advantages - Disadvantages to meeting stated purposes</th>
<th>+ Areas of support - Areas of opposition</th>
<th>Consensus reached</th>
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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Instructions
1. Using all the analysis work you've done so far, summarize the major elements of your organization design below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF ORGANIZATION:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What key organizational design elements will your PSPD program include in order to best support the school community in meeting the stated purpose(s) of your PSPD?</td>
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</table>
EVALUATION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION DESIGN

**Instructions:**

1. On your own, respond to each item.
2. When everyone is done, compare your results to those of your team members.
3. Use the items the team agrees are either a “no” or “somewhat” as input in refining the design you summarized on the prior page. In other words, a “no” or “somewhat” indicates some elements of your Organization design may need tuning up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>SOMEWHAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Your PLC includes people from multiple constituencies.</td>
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<td>2. Your PLC includes schedules and structures that reduce isolation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Professional Development time is clearly identified in your plan of organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Our PLC is tied to other school initiatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The organizational description will be easily understood by all stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. The organization elements address all aspects of your PLC purpose.</td>
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<td>7. The organization reflects a deep focus on what must be done - it is very targeted in facilitating the accomplishment of your advisory goals.</td>
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<td>8. The organization design is not just pie in the sky - it is doable in your setting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. All elements of your organization design are “intentional”, i.e., you can provide a meaningful rationale for each element as it relates to achieving advisory goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. You are prepared to address the rationale for what was left out of your design.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. The design leverages your strengths as a school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. The path to organization design implementation is clear.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. The knowledge and skill development requirements associated with each element are clear and can be addressed effectively.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Building Peer-Supported Professional Development

PROGRAM CONTENT
Peer-Supported Professional Development (Text for text-based discussion)

When we say that the purpose of our teacher-teaming program is to collaborate with one another, what is it we hope to achieve? What is it we hope to gain in the process?

At the most basic level, we can attend to the logistics of our work: Do we have the tools and materials we need to teach our classes; what is the latest school-wide information; and what issues are affecting us on a daily/weekly basis.

We, as practitioners, who are either teaching or otherwise working with the same students or in the same discipline or both can get to know one another better for the purpose of mutual understanding, and to establish and agree to norms of practice in our teams.

As practitioners, we can serve as advocates for one another and for particular students in the larger world of our school. If we feel overwhelmed or even cynical about the day-to-day goings-on in the bureaucracy, we can help one another access resources and information that we need, and be inspired by colleagues with new ideas or insights.

But are these kinds of peer support enough? If we get together regularly on a mutual basis to talk about the hot topic of the day or how to get more of what we need to do our work, is that it?

True, most of us want and need these things, and knowing that we are all in this together may make us feel better too. But as we learn to trust and talk more authentically with one another, could we actually reflect on our own practice, so that one actual purpose of our time together is peer-support — for our individual and collective professional development?

Could we use our common planning time to engage in on-going support and challenge to improve our own practice as a group of adults who are committed to our students’ learning and schooling? Could we go deeper into our inquiry as professionals to re-discover the reason and re-ignite the passion we bring to our work, both of which sometimes become hidden in the day-to-day challenges of keeping school? Could we create conditions and actually dare to reclaim our commitment to our own learning and that of our fellow team members – the same commitment that we hope to instill in our students? The answer is yes we can.
Working with colleagues for the purpose of peer-supported professional development is the highest value work we can possibly do together. We can re-affirm our commitment to the stake we have in our own future, the future of our students and the future of our own children by building our capacity to improve our craft and better engage our students in their own learning – just as we ourselves are doing – by modeling what we say we believe.

We can discover that even as experts in our respective fields, we can still access our beginner’s mind, and discover the power of our own vulnerability. We all want to do better, and with real peer support we can admit to one another that we do not know how to or are afraid to take a path less comfortable. In the company of fellow travelers, we embrace the same quest: How do we support one another today for the help I need right now and tomorrow, so that one crisis does not start a personal chain reaction of bad practice?

In our deepest hearts, we do not change because someone tells us we should; we only change when we tell ourselves we must; and to innovate we must risk something. Innovation is all about risk, but risking new behaviors or giving up old, less productive ones in solidarity with those with whom we work is how we change our world – from the inside out – by changing ourselves.

Tackling these risks will certainly require courage. The support of our teammates will provide us the cover to undertake the courageous risks that we must take in order to change ourselves in a manner that will allow us to better serve our students.

**Gregg Sinner**

School Change Coach
The Center for Secondary School Redesign
July 2009
Text-Based Seminar

Guidelines

Purpose
Enlargement of understanding of a text, not the achievement of some particular understanding.

Ground Rules
1. Listen actively.
2. Build on what others say.
3. Don’t step on others’ talk. Silences and pauses are OK.
4. Let the conversation flow as much as possible without raising hands or using a speaker’s list.
5. Make the assumptions underlying your comments explicit to others.
7. Watch your own air time – both in terms of how often you speak, and in terms of how much you say when you speak.
8. Refer to the text; challenge others to go to the text.

Notes to Facilitators
Text-Based Seminars can be remarkably engaging and productive for both students and adults. A Text-Based Seminar facilitator has two primary tasks: posing the framing question and keeping the group focused without pushing any particular agenda.

Facilitating a seminar is not terribly difficult, but it can be challenging. A few tips might make the job easier:

1. Invest time in creating the framing question. It needs to be substantive, clear, relevant to the participants’ experience, and likely to push their thinking in new directions. Above all, constructing a response to the question should require close reading of the text. We recommend that the framing question be genuine for everyone,
2. Including the facilitator, so that the entire group is engaged in the inquiry. Framing questions are often based on a quote from the text, which begins to establish a pattern of using the document as a basis for the conversation.

3. In addition to the framing question, create a few follow-up questions that seem to raise the level of participants’ thinking. If the groups takes off, you may never use them (or you may create new ones that come from the conversation itself), but it’s a good idea to have something in your hip pocket, especially if you aren’t very experienced at this kind of facilitation.

4. Unless the entire group does Text-Based Seminars routinely, it is useful to go over the purposes and ground rules before you begin. Because so many conversations (in school and out) are based more on opinion than evidence, and aim toward winning the argument rather than constructing new knowledge, it is often important to remind the group of the basics: **work from the text** and **strive to enlarge your understanding**.

5. Give the group time (about 15 minutes) to re-read the text with the framing question in mind.

6. The most common facilitation problems in this kind of seminar come from two kinds of participants: the folks who have to win, and those who want to express opinions independent of the text and will use any quote they can find as a springboard. Usually, a reminder of the ground rules will pull them back, although it is sometimes necessary to redirect the conversation if you are dealing with a particularly insistent “winner.” With the “winner,” asking the group to examine closely the assumptions underneath the arguments or opinions being presented sometimes helps. When someone doesn’t stick to the text, it is often helpful to ask the group to look for evidence of the opinion being expressed in the text. What you **don’t** want to do is ask these two types of participants a direct question, or ask them to cite the evidence in the text for their opinions (although you might be tempted to do so). The goal is to redirect the conversation away from these folks, not to get them to talk more!

7. It is sometimes useful to keep running notes of the conversation, and to periodically summarize for the group what has been said.
8. It is also sometimes useful (especially if you are nervous) to have a “plant” among the participants – someone who will model ideal participant behavior at an early point in the seminar.

9. It is sometimes useful to keep running notes of the conversation, and to periodically summarize for the group what has been said.

As is always the case when facilitating, try to keep the conversation balanced. Don’t let one or two people dominate. If there are many quiet people, asking them to speak in pairs for a few minutes on a particular point can sometimes give them an entry into the conversation when you come back to the large group. Sometimes you just have to say, “let’s have someone who hasn’t said much yet speak,” and then use lots of wait time, event though it may feel somewhat uncomfortable to do so.
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Instructions
1. Using all the analysis work you've done so far, summarize the major elements of your content design below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF CONTENT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What key content design elements will your professional learning community include in order to best support educators in meeting the stated purpose(s) of your PSPD program?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

EVALUATION OF YOUR CONTENT DESIGN
1. On your own, respond to each item.
2. When everyone is done, compare your results to those of your team members.
3. Use the items the team agrees are either a “no” or “somewhat” as input in refining the design you summarized on the prior page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>SOME-WHAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The content description will be easily understood by all stakeholders.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The content will be embraced by students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The content elements address all aspects of your Purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The content reflects a deep focus on what must be done - it is very targeted in facilitating the accomplishment of your PLC goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The content design is not just pie in the sky - it is doable in your setting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. All elements of your content design are “intentional”, i.e., you can provide a meaningful rationale for each element as it relates to achieving PLC goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. You are prepared to address the rationale for what content was left out of your design.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. The design leverages your strengths as a school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The path to content design implementation is clear.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. The knowledge and skill development requirements associated with each content element are clear and can be addressed effectively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. The knowledge and skill development requirements necessary to make the content come alive and fully engage students are clear and can be addressed effectively.</td>
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Building Peer-Supported Professional Development

ASSESSMENT
### Professional Learning Communities: Team Indicators of Progress (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1: Inquiry</td>
<td>Focus of Learning is External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2: Initiation</td>
<td>Learning is Efficient and Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3: Implementation</td>
<td>Learning is Data-Driven and Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4: Institutionalization</td>
<td>Learning is Generative and Systemic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### All team members...

**PLC UNDERSTANDING**
1. Accurately say what PLC stands for and articulate the four questions.
2. Describe what a PLC does and why they are important.
3. Articulate what makes a PLC different from a grade-level or department team; how they work together and how they use data.
4. Describe their PLC as “the way we work and learn together as professionals to improve student achievement.”

**COMMUNICATIONS**
1. Share information with their PLCs and with their principal.
2. Share information within their content areas/grade-levels.
3. Share information openly on a school wide basis. Multiple forms of communication are used including technology, presentations, ongoing updates, etc.
4. Share information in appropriate forums that detail progress of students, instructional improvements, assessment strategies, and new learning.

**NORMS**
1. Have a set of norms for how the team will work together.
2. Post team-developed group norms in clear sight when meeting.
3. Periodically review posted norms and refer to them during meetings to support their active use.
4. Automatically behave in accordance with their team-developed norms. Adjust norms as needs arise.

**FOCUS OF CONVERSATIONS**
1. Discuss students and plan classroom interventions.
2. Discuss student learning needs and share instructional strategies.
3. Collaboratively examine student work and plan strategies that all members will use based on student learning needs.
4. Engage in dialogue around instructional innovations focused on the differentiated needs of students.

**MEETING PROCESS**
1. Meet on a regular basis. Meeting protocols such as agendas and meeting records/goal sheets are kept.
2. Meet on a regular basis. Use standard meeting protocols and effective meeting practices to manage their time and participation.
3. Meet on a regular basis. Use standard meeting protocols and incorporate the use of tools and group process techniques that aid in effective collaboration. Time in meetings is well spent; participation is broad-based.
4. Meet on a regular basis. Develop and use a variety of meeting protocols, tools and group process techniques based on the changing needs of the team. Time in meetings is efficient and effective; broad-based participation is the norm.

**DATA**
1. Look at state test data to identify grade level or content gaps in overall achievement. Disaggregate data by subgroups and standards.
2. Use state/local assessments to determine grade level or content specific learning strengths/weaknesses; do line-item analysis.
3. Analyze a variety of student learning results on an ongoing basis to identify achievement gaps in specific skill areas, related to specific standards.
4. Develop pattern of regular analysis of period-specific data on common formative and summative assessments to make early and frequent instructional adjustments, and personalize student support. Targeted differentiation based on their own student data as it relates to key standards and SMART goals.
Professional Learning Communities: Team Indicators of Progress (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1: Inquiry</th>
<th>Stage 2: Initiation</th>
<th>Stage 3: Implementation</th>
<th>Stage 4: Institutionalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus of Learning is External</td>
<td>Learning is Efficient and Cooperative</td>
<td>Learning is Data-Driven and Collaborative</td>
<td>Learning is Generative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**All team members...**

**GOALS**
1. Have grade-level/content area course or unit goals.
2. Have common content area or unit SMART goals.
3. Have collaboratively developed SMART goals based on data that focus on improving student learning; monitor progress toward their goals on regular basis.
4. Have collaboratively developed SMART goals based on data that focus on improving student learning; monitor goals on ongoing basis using formative assessments. Use goals to guide research on best instructional practices and plan own professional development.

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**
1. Attend workshops that are offered by school or district.
2. Actively seek out professional learning opportunities.
3. Collaboratively analyze data and monitor goal progress to identify professional learning opportunities based on student needs. PLC teams identify their own needs for support.
4. Create and present professional learning opportunities directly related to improvement goals. Embed a variety of methods for professional learning into PLC work (e.g., Lesson Study, Action Research, Peer Coaching, etc.) PLC teams identify their own needs for support.

**ASSESSMENTS**
1. Use classroom quizzes and unit tests to assess student performance. Have at least one test that is common to all.
2. Use formative assessments to assess student performance.
3. Collaboratively create common formative assessments to track student learning progress on targeted standards.
4. Collaboratively create common formative and summative assessments within their SMART goal area to inform teachers’ instructional decisions.

**LEADERSHIP CAPACITY**
1. Contribute to the topics and processes for PLC work.
2. Rely on a team leader to set direction for the team (e.g., department chair, administrator, PLC leader, etc.)
3. Have an opportunity to act as leaders to set direction for the team.
4. Share or rotate leadership roles equally and collaboratively define the group’s direction.

**CURRICULUM**
1. Select common standards by content area to focus improvement efforts.
2. Identify power standards/essential learnings for every course, unit or grade-level/content area.
3. Use a common, shared curriculum for each course or grade-level/content area. Improvement is focused on power standards/essential learnings.
4. Confirm a guaranteed viable curriculum both vertically and horizontally for every content area or course sequence.

**TEAM GOAL/TEAM DEVELOPED QUALITY INDICATOR**
1. -
2. -
3. -
4. -
Critical Issues for Team Consideration

Team Content Area:

Team Members:

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<tr>
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<th>7</th>
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<th>10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not True of Our Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our Team is Addressing</td>
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<td>True of Our Team</td>
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</table>

1. ___ We have identified team norms and protocols to guide us in working together.

2. ___ We have analyzed student achievement data and have established SMART goals that we are working independently to achieve.

3. ___ Each member of our team is clear on the power standards for our course in general, as well as the power standards for each unit.

4. ___ We have aligned our power standards with state and district standards and the high-stakes exams required of our students.

5. ___ We have identified course content and/or topics that can be eliminated so we can devote more time to essential curriculum.

11. ___ We have established the proficiency standard we want each student to achieve on each skill and concept examined with our common formative assessments.

12. ___ We have developed common summative assessments that help us assess the strengths and weaknesses of our program.

13. ___ We have established the proficiency standard we want each student to achieve on each skill and concept examined with our summative assessments.

14. ___ We have agreed on the criteria we will use in judging the quality of student work related to the power standards of our course, and we practice applying those criteria to ensure consistency.

15. ___ We have taught students the criteria we will use in judging the quality of their work and have provided
6. ___ We have agreed on how to best sequence the content of the course and have established pacing guides to help students achieve mastery of the power standards.

7. ___ We have identified the prerequisite knowledge and skills students need in order to master the power standards of our course and each unit of this course.

8. ___ We have identified strategies and created instruments to assess whether students have the prerequisite knowledge and skills.

9. ___ We have developed strategies and systems to assist students in acquiring prerequisite knowledge and skills when they are lacking in those areas.

10. ___ We have developed frequent common formative assessments that help us determine each student’s mastery of the power standards, and a plan to immediately address key deficiencies.

11. ___ We have developed strategies and established pacing guides to help students achieve mastery of the power standards.

16. ___ We evaluate our adherence to and the effectiveness of our team norms at least twice each year.

17. ___ We use the results of our common assessments to assist each other in building on strengths and addressing weaknesses as part of a process of continuous improvement designed to help students achieve at higher levels.

18. ___ We use the results of our common assessments to identify students who need additional time and support to master the power standards, and we work within the systems and processes of the school to ensure they receive that support.

19. ___ We have a systemic plan to mentor new hires on the PLC vision and process.

20. ___ We have a plan to celebrate and share successes.

Professional Learning Communities at Work Plan Book, Solution Tree 2006: www.solution-tree.com
Which Critical Issue Will OUR Team Consider?

Team Content Area:

Team Members:

1. Which critical issue is the best starting point for our team for this year’s remaining work?

2. What is our team’s SMART goal? How do we know that is where to best focus our energy?

3. What steps/activities will be initiated to achieve this goal? What products will be created?

4. Who is responsible for initiating or sustaining the steps/activities listed in #3?

5. What is our anticipated timeframe for each step of our plan?

6. What evidence can we collect to determine the team’s progress toward our goal?
SCHOOL ASSESSMENT INVENTORY EXERCISE

Instructions

1. With your teammates, complete the charts on the following two pages.

2. Fill in the columns as follows:
   - **Column A**: Identify what is assessed in your school
   - **Column B**: Describe the methodology employed, to include who is involved and how often it takes place
   - **Column C**: Describe how effective the assessment method is with regard to the items below - assign it a score of 1 (totally ineffective) to 10 (role model - couldn’t be better)
     - Having a positive impact on student achievement, civic responsibility, social/emotional growth, and post secondary preparedness
     - Keeping everyone’s eye on the goal(s)
     - Generating data that is useful re: making course corrections and providing useful information on knowledge and skill gaps that can be addressed effectively with professional development activities.
     - Being frequent enough not to let things spiral out of control, or to miss significant performance decrements within a reasonable amount of time
     - Measuring the right stuff, i.e. the process is efficient and only targets those things that make a difference
     - Being cost effective, i.e., the level-of-effort and cost of maintaining the assessment process is clearly outweighed by the performance enhancements it accrues or maintains
     - Being self-corrective, i.e., the assessment process has its own feedback mechanisms to insure that it is working as designed
   - **Column D**: Evaluate whether that particular assessment methodology has application for the assessment of your PLC program

3. Be prepared to share your findings with another team per the facilitator’s instructions

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A: What is Assessed? (describe)</th>
<th>B: Methodology Employed? (describe)</th>
<th>C. Effectiveness (1-10)? (explain)</th>
<th>D: Applicability to Your PLC? (rationale)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Instructions

1. Using all the analysis work you’ve done so far, summarize the major elements of your assessment design below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT OF ASSESSMENT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What key assessment design elements will your school employ to ensure that individuals meet the expectations you have of them, that the stated purpose(s) of the program are met, and that program specific outcomes are measured?</td>
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</table>
## EVALUATION OF YOUR ASSESSMENT DESIGN

**Instructions:**

1. On your own, respond to each item.
2. When everyone is done, compare your results to those of your team members.
3. Use the items the team agrees are either a "no" or "somewhat" as input in refining the design you summarized on the prior page. In other words, a "no" or "somewhat" indicates some elements of your Assessment design may need tuning up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>SOME-WHAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The assessment design will make sense to all stakeholders.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The assessment elements support all aspects of your Purpose.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The assessment design is not just pie in the sky - it is doable in your setting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. The assessment design is practical, i.e., it is neither unwieldy nor too costly to implement and sustain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. All elements of your assessment design are &quot;intentional&quot;, i.e., you can provide a meaningful rationale for each element as it relates to achieving advisory goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. The design leverages your strengths as a school with regard to assessment methodologies currently being employed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. The path to assessment design implementation is clear.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. The knowledge and skill development requirements associated with each assessment element are clear and can be addressed effectively.</td>
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Building Peer-Supported Professional Development

EXAMPLES OF TEAMING PRACTICES
ARTICLES/GOAL SETTING
Improving Relationships Within the Schoolhouse

Roland S. Barth

Relationships among educators within a school range from vigorously healthy to dangerously competitive. Strengthen those relationships, and you improve professional practice.

One incontrovertible finding emerges from my career spent working in and around schools: The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else. If the relationships between administrators and teachers are trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative, then the relationships between teachers and students, between students and students, and between teachers and parents are likely to be trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative. If, on the other hand, relationships between administrators and teachers are fearful, competitive, suspicious, and corrosive, then these qualities will disseminate throughout the school community.

In short, the relationships among the educators in a school define all relationships within that school’s culture. Teachers and administrators demonstrate all too well a capacity to either enrich or diminish one another’s lives and thereby enrich or diminish their schools.

Schools are full of what I call non-discussables—important matters that, as a profession, we seldom openly discuss. These include the leadership of the principal, issues of race, the underperforming teacher, our personal visions for a good school, and, of course, the nature of the relationships among the adults within the school. Actually, we do talk about the non-discussables—but only in the parking lot, during the car pool, and at the dinner table. That’s the definition of a non-discussable: an issue of sufficient import that it commands our attention but is so incendiary that we cannot discuss it in polite society—at a faculty or PTA meeting, for example. (For more on this topic, see my article “The Culture Builder” in the May 2002 issue of Educational Leadership.)

Consequently, the issues surrounding adult relationships in school, like other non-discussables, litter the schoolhouse floor, lurking like land mines, with trip wires emanating from each. We cannot take a step without fear of losing a limb. Thus paralyzed, we can be certain that next September, adult relationships in the school will remain unchanged. School improvement is impossible when we give nondiscussables such extraordinary power over us.
Relationships in Schools
So let's discuss the elephant in the room—the various forms of relationships among adults within the schoolhouse. They might be categorized in four ways: parallel play, adversarial relationships, congenial relationships, and collegial relationships.

Parallel Play
Parallel play, a wonderful concept from the preschool literature, is thought to be a primitive stage of human development through which 2- and 3-year-olds soon pass on their way to more sophisticated forms of interaction. To illustrate, imagine two 3-year-olds busily engaged in opposite corners of a sandbox. One has a shovel and a bucket; the other has a rake and a hoe. At no time do they share their tools, let alone collaborate to build a sandcastle. They may inadvertently throw sand in each other's face from time to time, but they seldom interact intentionally. Although in close proximity for a long period of time, each is so self-absorbed, so totally engrossed in what he or she is doing, that the two of them will go on for hours working in isolation.

Parallel play offers, of course, a perfect description of how teachers interact at many elementary, middle, and high schools. The term also aptly describes the relationship between one school principal and another whose school is only blocks away. One teacher summed it up with discouraging accuracy: “Here, we all live in our separate caves.” A playful(?) notice on the wall of a faculty lounge captured it even better: “We're all in this—alone.”

The abiding signature of parallel play in education is the self-contained classroom, with the door shut and a piece of artwork covering that little pane of glass. The cost of concealing what we do is isolation from colleagues who might cause us to examine and improve our practices.

Adversarial Relationships
I once heard a Boston school principal offer this sage observation: “We educators have drawn our wagons into a circle and trained our guns—on each other.”

Adversarial relationships take many forms in schools. Sometimes they are blatant: The 7th grade algebra teacher on one side of the hall lobs a metaphorical hand grenade into the classroom of the 8th grade geometry teacher on the other side, saying to parents, “You don't want your child in that classroom. All they do is fool around with blocks.” Reciprocal unfriendly fire is returned: “You don't want your child in that classroom; it's a grim, joyless place with desks in rows and endless worksheets.”
One principal concluded his remarks to a large parent group with—I think—a slip: “Here at John Adams Elementary School, we all live on the bleeding edge.”

No wonder so many teachers engage in parallel play. Barricaded behind their classroom doors, they escape the depleting conflicts so rampant among the adults outside.

More often, we educators become one another's adversaries in a more subtle way—by withholding. School people carry around extraordinary insights about their practice—about discipline, parental involvement, staff development, child development, leadership, and curriculum. I call these insights craft knowledge. Acquired over the years in the school of hard knocks, these insights offer every bit as much value to improving schools as do elegant research studies and national reports. If one day we educators could only disclose our rich craft knowledge to one another, we could transform our schools overnight.

But I find educators reluctant to make these gold nuggets available to others. Sadly, when one educator persists in repeating the failures of the past while another next door has great success, everyone loses.

When a teacher does place value on what she knows and musters up the courage and generosity of spirit to share an important learning—“I've got this great idea about how to teach math without ability-grouping the kids”—a common response from fellow teachers is, “Big deal. What's she after, a promotion?” Regrettably, as a profession, we do not place much value on our craft knowledge or on those who share it.

Just think. This June, thousands of teachers and principals will retire. With them will go all they have learned over the years, forever lost to the profession. The following September, newcomers will arrive to spend their careers painfully learning what those who just left had already figured out.

We also become one another's adversaries through competition. In the cruel world of schools, we become competitors for scarce resources and recognition. One teacher put it this way: “I teach in a culture of competition in which teaching is seen as an arcane mystery and teachers guard their tricks like great magicians.”

The guiding principles of competition are, “The better you look, the worse I look,” and “The worse you look, the better I look.” No wonder so many educators root for the failure of their peers rather than assist with their success.
Congenial Relationships

Fortunately, schools also abound with adult relationships that are interactive—and positive. We all see evidence of congeniality in schools. A lot of it seems to center around food: One teacher makes the coffee and pours it for a colleague. Or around the activities of daily living: A principal gives a teacher a ride home so she can care for her sick child.

Congenial relationships are personal and friendly. We shouldn't take them lightly; when the alarm rings at 6:00 in the morning, the alacrity with which an educator jumps out of bed and prepares for school is directly related to the adults with whom he or she will interact that day. The promise of congenial relationships helps us shut off that alarm each day and arise.

Collegial Relationships

Congenial relationships represent a precondition for another kind of adult relationship highly prized by school reformers yet highly elusive: collegiality. Of the four categories of relationships, collegiality is the hardest to establish.

Famous baseball manager Casey Stengel once muttered, “Getting good players is easy. Getting 'em to play together is the hard part.” Schools are full of good players. Collegiality is about getting them to play together, about growing a professional learning community.1

When I visit a school and look for evidence of collegiality among teachers and administrators—signs that educators are “playing together”—the indicators I seek are

- Educators talking with one another about practice.
- Educators sharing their craft knowledge.
- Educators observing one another while they are engaged in practice.
- Educators rooting for one another's success.

Creating a Culture of Collegiality

The good schools in which I've worked and observed have replaced parallel play and adversarial relationships among adults with congenial and collegial relationships. Let me offer a few examples of what I have seen teachers and other school leaders do to create a culture of collegiality in their schools.
Talking About Practice

I once had an appointment with a teacher in the faculty lounge. On the way in, I noted a sign on the door that read, “No students allowed in the faculty room.” It seemed a bit unfriendly, but I remembered during my days as a teacher needing a few moments of fire-free time. When I asked the teacher about the sign, she said, “That’s the written rule in this teachers’ room.”

“What’s the unwritten rule?” I asked.

She replied, “No talking about teaching in the faculty lounge.”

Regretfully, I find that unwritten rule firmly in place in many teacher and administrator gatherings. A conversation about the Red Sox or the Yankees can be noteworthy and lively—an example of congenial behavior. But a professional learning community is built on continual discourse about our important work—conversations about student evaluation, parent involvement, curriculum development, and team teaching.

I know one principal who boldly suggested to the faculty that for one week, they try permitting in the faculty lounge only education-related conversation. To everyone’s amazement, this simple trial worked, giving permission to teachers and administrators alike to talk about their work. They decided to continue the practice. They banished the Yankees and the Red Sox to the hallways and the parking lot—at least until the playoffs!

Sharing Craft Knowledge

In some schools, a typical meeting begins with a participant or two sharing a front-burner issue about which they have recently learned something important or useful. A teacher new to the school might explain how students were evaluated in a previous workplace. A parent might share in a PTA meeting an idea about helping children with homework. A principal might share with other principals a new policy about assigning students to classes.

Once the exchange of craft knowledge becomes institutionally sanctioned, educators no longer feel pretentious or in violation of a taboo by sharing their insights. A new taboo—against withholding what we know—replaces the old. Repeated practice soon embeds generous disclosure of craft knowledge into the culture of a school or a school system.

Observing One Another

Perhaps no practice evokes more apprehension among educators than the prospect of one of our peers camping out in the back of our classroom for a few hours and watching us engage in the difficult art of teaching. Another unwritten rule in
most schools seems to be, “If you want to see me, come in before school, during recess, at lunchtime, or after school. If you come in and plunk yourself down while I am teaching, you die!” I used to think this was a message only parents received. But I now see that we educators telegraph it to one another as well.

Making our practice mutually visible will never be easy, because we will never be fully confident that we know what we're supposed to be doing and that we're doing it well. And we're never quite sure just how students will behave. None of us wants to risk being exposed as incompetent. Yet there is no more powerful way of learning and improving on the job than by observing others and having others observe us.

In one school I know, the principal and a few teachers wanted to do away with the taboo against observing in one another's workspaces. They decided to hold each faculty meeting in the classroom of a different teacher. The host teacher devoted the first 10 minutes to a show-and-tell: “Here is my reading area. Here is my science corner, and these are student projects on the weather.”

In two years' time, everyone had observed the sacred space of everyone else and had in turn been observed in their own space. Follow-up conversations often ensued: “When I was in your classroom last week, you mentioned your work with cooperative learning. Can you tell me more?” Such mild observations reduce the anxiety surrounding visits that probe a teacher's practices.

But general, unfocused “bathing” in one another's classrooms usually yields only modest results. Deeper and more instructive peer observations emerge when both parties forge an agreement beforehand. Elements of an effective contract might include some of the following:

- Our visits will be reciprocal. You visit me this week; I visit you next week.
- What we see and say will be confidential, between us.
- We will decide together, beforehand, just what I will attend to during the visit—for instance, how you are handling two students with attention deficit disorder.
- We will agree on the day, time, and length of the visit.
- We will have a conversation afterward to discuss our observations and share our learning.
These contracts increase the ownership of mutual observation, reduce the fear surrounding it, and increase the likelihood of worthwhile learning. Nonetheless, as a principal, I found that creating a school culture in which mutual visits were commonplace was enormously difficult. So I created an array of carrots and sticks, each intended to address the litany of reasons why “we can't possibly do this”:

- **Time**: “I'll cover for you or get a sub.”
- **Administrative fiat**: “Before March 31, I expect each of you to observe for one half-day in the classroom of each teacher to whom you might be sending students next year.” It *does* make a difference with which teacher we place Johnny in September.
- **Social pressure**: A chart on the wall of the faculty room noted who had and hadn't yet observed.

But still nothing happened. Parallel play continued to rule. Finally, one teacher observed in a faculty meeting—with a bit of hostility, I thought!—“Well, Roland, when was the last time we saw another principal observing you running a faculty meeting?”

Well, duh! As the bumper sticker states so well, “You can't lead where you won't go!”

So at the next faculty meeting, a neighboring principal sat at the back of the room. At the conclusion of the meeting, she shared her observations and compared the meeting with faculty meetings at her own school. Then two teachers and I visited her school, observed its faculty meeting, and offered our observations.

The logjam was broken. Mutual classroom observations began. You *can* lead where you *will* go.

**Rooting for One Another**

All too common in our profession is widespread awareness of a fellow educator in trouble: the principal under siege from a group of parents, or a beginning teacher being worked over by a tough classroom of kids. We monitor the situation from afar as another person is hung out to dry—and we do nothing.

Imagine, on the other hand, a school in which all 32 teachers not only are aware of the punishment that you are experiencing at the hands of those difficult students but also offer to help. To take a youngster or two into their own classes. To invite you into their classrooms so you can observe them handling these same students. To meet with you after school to reflect on the day and help plan the next. To share manipulative curriculum materials capable of engaging students with a short attention span.
Imagine each of these 32 teachers being vitally interested in the current front-burner issue of every other teacher. One teacher might be working on integrating language and social studies instruction. Another might be working on multi-age grouping. Colleagues put relevant articles into your mailbox. Others share effective practices from other schools in which they have worked. Everyone on the faculty periodically asks how things are going and what they can do to help. I suspect that every one of us would give a lot to work in this school.

**What School Leaders Can Do**

Leadership has been delightfully defined as “the ability to foster consequential relationships.” Easier said than done. To promote collegial relationships in the school, someone has to make relationships among adults a discussable. Someone must serve as a minesweeper, disarming those landmines. I can think of no more crucial role for any school leader.

What else can a school leader do to promote a culture of collegiality within the schoolhouse? Researcher Judith Warren Little found that school leaders foster collegiality when they

- **State expectations explicitly.** For instance, “I expect all of us to work together this year, share our craft knowledge, and help one another in whatever ways we can.”

- **Model collegiality.** For instance, visibly join in cheering on others or have another principal observe a faculty meeting.

- **Reward those who behave as colleagues.** For instance, grant release time, recognition, space, materials, and funds to those who collaborate.

- **Protect those who engage in these collegial behaviors.** A principal should not say, for instance, “Janet has a great idea that she wants to share with us today.” This sets Janet up for a possible harsh response. Rather, the principal might say, “I

  observed something in Janet's classroom last week that blew my socks off, and I've asked her to share it with us.” In this way, leaders can run interference for other educators.

A precondition for doing anything to strengthen our practice and improve a school is the existence of a collegial culture in which professionals talk about practice, share their craft knowledge, and observe and root for the success of one another.
Without these in place, no meaningful improvement—no staff or curriculum development, no teacher leadership, no student appraisal, no team teaching, no parent involvement, and no sustained change—is possible.

Empowerment, recognition, satisfaction, and success in our work—all in scarce supply within our schools—will never stem from going it alone as a masterful teacher, principal, or student, no matter how accomplished one is. Empowerment, recognition, satisfaction, and success come only from being an active participant within a masterful group—a group of colleagues.

Endnote

For my thinking about collegiality, I am deeply indebted to the work of Judith Warren Little: *School Success and Staff Development in Urban Desegregated Schools* (Center for Action Research, 1981) and "Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation" (*Education Research Journal*, 1982).

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Professional Learning Communities: What Are They And Why Are They Important?

In education circles, the term *learning community* has become commonplace. It is being used to mean any number of things, such as extending classroom practice into the community; bringing community personnel into the school to enhance the curriculum and learning tasks for students; or engaging students, teachers, and administrators simultaneously in learning - to suggest just a few.

This paper focuses on what Astuto and colleagues (1993) label *the professional community of learners*, in which the teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals so that students benefit. This arrangement has also been termed *communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*.
As an organizational arrangement, the professional learning community is seen as a powerful staff development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement. Thus, persons at all levels of the educational system concerned about school improvement - state department personnel, intermediate service agency staff, district and campus administrators, teacher leaders, key parents and local school community members - should find this paper of interest.

This paper represents an abbreviation of Hord's review of the literature (1997), which explored the concept and operationalization of professional learning communities and their outcomes for staff and students.

The Beginnings of Professional Learning Community

During the eighties, Rosenholtz (1989) brought teachers' workplace factors into the discussion of teaching quality, maintaining that teachers who felt supported in their own ongoing learning and classroom practice were more committed and effective than those who did not receive such confirmation. Support by means of teacher networks, cooperation among colleagues, and expanded professional roles increased teacher efficacy in meeting students' needs. Further, Rosenholtz found that teachers with a high sense of their own efficacy were more likely to adopt new classroom behaviors and also more likely to stay in the profession.
McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) confirmed Rosenholtz's findings, suggesting that when teachers had opportunities for collaborative inquiry and the learning related to it, they were able to develop and share a body of wisdom gleaned from their experience. Adding to the discussion, Darling-Hammond (1996) cited shared decision making as a factor in curriculum reform and the transformation of teaching roles in some schools. In such schools, structured time is provided for teachers to work together in planning instruction, observing each other's classrooms, and sharing feedback. These and other attributes characterize professional learning communities.

### Attributes of Professional Learning Communities

The literature on professional learning communities repeatedly gives attention to five attributes of such organizational arrangements: supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice. Each of these is discussed briefly.

#### Supportive and Shared Leadership

The school change and educational leadership literatures clearly recognize the role and influence of the campus administrator (principal, and sometimes assistant principal) on whether change will occur in the school. It seems clear that transforming a school organization into a learning community can be done only with the sanction of the leaders and the active nurturing of the entire staff's development as a community. Thus, a look at the principal of a school whose staff is a professional learning community seems a good starting point for describing what these learning communities look like and how the principal "accepts a collegial relationship with teachers" (D. Rainey, personal communication, March 13, 1997) to share leadership, power, and decision making.
Lucianne Carmichael, the first resident principal of the Harvard University Principal Center and a principal who nurtured a professional community of learners in her own school, discusses the position of authority and power typically held by principals, in which the staff views them as all-wise and all-competent (1982). Principals have internalized this "omnicompetence," Carmichael asserts. Others in the school reinforce it, making it difficult for principals to admit that they themselves can benefit from professional development opportunities, or to recognize the dynamic potential of staff contributions to decision making. Furthermore, when the principal's position is so thoroughly dominant, it is difficult for staff to propose divergent views or ideas about the school's effectiveness.

Carmichael proposes that the notion of principals' omnicompetence be "ditched" in favor of their participation in their own professional development. Kleine-Kracht (1993) concurs and suggests that administrators, along with teachers, must be learners too, "questioning, investigating, and seeking solutions" (p. 393) for school improvement. The traditional pattern that "teachers teach, students learn, and administrators manage is completely altered . . . [There is] no longer a hierarchy of who knows more than someone else, but rather the need for everyone to contribute" (p. 393).

This new relationship forged between administrators and teachers leads to shared and collegial leadership in the school, where all grow professionally and learn to view themselves (to use an athletic metaphor) as "all playing on the same team and working toward the same goal: a better school" (Hoerr, 1996, p. 381).

Louis and Kruse (1995) identify the supportive leadership of principals as one of the necessary human resources for restructuring staff into school-based professional communities. The authors refer to these principals as "post-heroic leaders who do not view themselves as the architects of school effectiveness" (p. 234). Prestine (1993) also defines characteristics of principals in schools that undertake school restructuring: a willingness to share authority, the capacity to facilitate the work of staff, and the ability to participate without dominating.
Sergiovanni explains that "the sources of authority for leadership are embedded in shared ideas" (1994b, p. 214), not in the power of position. Snyder, Acker-Hocevar, and Snyder (1996) assert that it is also important that the principal believe that teachers have the capacity to respond to the needs of students, that this belief "provides moral strength for principals to meet difficult political and educational challenges along the way" (p. 19). Senge (quoted by O'Neil, 1995) adds that the principal's job is to create an environment in which the staff can learn continuously; "[i]n turn, . . . the job of the superintendent is to find principals and support [such] principals" (p. 21) who create this environment.

An additional dimension, then, is a chief executive of the school district who supports and encourages continuous learning of its professionals. This observation suggests that no longer can leaders be thought of as top-down agents of change or seen as the visionaries of the corporation; instead leaders must be regarded as democratic teachers.

**Collective Creativity**

In 1990, Peter Senge's book *The Fifth Discipline* arrived in bookstores and began popping up in the boardrooms of corporate America. Over the next year or so, the book and its description of *learning organizations*, which might serve to increase organizational capacity and creativity, moved into the educational environment. The idea of a learning organization "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 3) caught the attention of educators who were struggling to plan and implement reform in the nation's schools. As Senge's paradigm shift was explored by educators and shared in educational journals, the label became *learning communities*.

In schools, the learning community is demonstrated by people from multiple constituencies, at all levels, collaboratively
and continually working together (Louis & Kruse, 1995). Such collaborative work is grounded in what Newmann (reported by Brandt, 1995) and Louis and Kruse label reflective dialogue, in which staff conduct conversations about students and teaching and learning, identifying related issues and problems. Griffin (cited by Sergiovanni, 1994a, p. 154) refers to these activities as inquiry, and

believes that as principals and teachers inquire together they create community. Inquiry helps them to overcome chasms caused by various specializations of grade level and subject matter. Inquiry forces debate among teachers about what is important. Inquiry promotes understanding and appreciation for the work of others. . . . And inquiry helps principals and teachers create the ties that bond them together as a special group and that bind them to a shared set of ideas. Inquiry, in other words, helps principals and teachers become a community of learners.

Participants in such conversations learn to apply new ideas and information to problem solving and therefore are able to create new conditions for students. Key tools in this process are shared values and vision; supportive physical, temporal, and social conditions; and a shared personal practice. We will look at each of these in turn.

**Shared Values and Vision**

"Vision is a trite term these days, and at various times it refers to mission, purpose, goals, objectives, or a sheet of paper posted near the principal's office" (Isaacson & Bamburg, 1992, p. 42). Sharing vision is not just agreeing with a good idea; it is a particular mental image of what is important to an individual and to an organization. Staff are encouraged not only to be involved in the process of developing a shared vision but to use that vision as a guidepost in making decisions about teaching and learning in the school (ibid.).

A core characteristic of the vision is an undeviating focus on student learning, maintains Louis and Kruse (1995), in
which each student's potential achievement is carefully considered. These shared values and vision lead to binding norms of behavior that the staff supports.

In such a community, the individual staff member is responsible for his/her actions, but the common good is placed on a par with personal ambition. The relationships between individuals are described as caring. Such caring is supported by open communication, made possible by trust (Fawcett, 1996).

**Supportive Conditions**

Several kinds of factors determine when, where, and how the staff can regularly come together as a unit to do the learning, decision making, problem solving, and creative work that characterize a professional learning community. In order for learning communities to function productively, the physical or structural conditions and the human qualities and capacities of the people involved must be optimal (Boyd, 1992; Louis & Kruse, 1995).

**Physical conditions.** Louis and Kruse identify the following physical factors that support learning communities: time to meet and talk, small school size and physical proximity of the staff to one another, interdependent teaching roles, well-developed communication structures, school autonomy, and teacher empowerment. An additional factor is the staff's input in selecting teachers and administrators for the school, and even encouraging staff who are not in tune with the program to find work elsewhere.

Boyd presents a similar list of physical factors that result in an environment conducive to school change and improvement: the availability of resources; schedules and structures that reduce isolation; policies that encourage greater autonomy, foster collaboration, enhance effective communication, and provide for staff development. Time is clearly a resource: "Time, or more properly lack of it, is one of the most difficult problems faced by schools and
districts." (Watts & Castle, 1993, p. 306). Time is a significant issue for faculties who wish to work together collegially, and it has been cited as both a barrier (when it is not available) and a supportive factor (when it is available) by staffs engaging in school improvement.

**People capacities.** One of the first characteristics cited by Louis and Kruse (1995) of individuals in a productive learning community is a willingness to accept feedback and to work toward improvement. In addition, the following qualities are needed: respect and trust among colleagues at the school and district level, possession of an appropriate cognitive and skill base that enables effective teaching and learning, supportive leadership from administrators and others in key roles, and relatively intensive socialization processes.

Note the strong parallel with the people or human factors identified by Boyd (1992): positive teacher attitudes toward schooling, students, and change; students’ heightened interest and engagement with learning (which could be construed as both an outcome and an input, it seems); norms of continuous critical inquiry and continuous improvement; a widely shared vision or sense of purpose; a norm of involvement in decision making; collegial relationships among teachers; positive, caring student-teacher-administrator relationships; a sense of community in the school; and two factors beyond the school staff - supportive community attitudes and parents and community members as partners and allies.

Boyd (1992) points out that the physical and people factors are highly interactive, many of them influencing the others. Boyd and Hord (1994) clustered the factors into four overarching functions that help build a context conducive to change and improvement: reducing staff isolation, increasing staff capacity, providing a caring and productive environment, and improving the quality of the school's programs for students.
Shared Personal Practice

Review of a teacher's behavior by colleagues is the norm in the professional learning community (Louis & Kruse, 1995). This practice is not evaluative but is part of the "peers helping peers" process. Such review is conducted regularly by teachers, who visit each other's classrooms to observe, script notes, and discuss their observations with the visited peer. The process is based on the desire for individual and community improvement and is enabled by the mutual respect and trustworthiness of staff members.

Wignall (1992) describes a high school in which teachers share their practice and enjoy a high level of collaboration in their daily work life. Mutual respect and understanding are the fundamental requirements for this kind of workplace culture. Teachers find help, support, and trust as a result of developing warm relationships with each other. "Teachers tolerate (even encourage) debate, discussion and disagreement. They are comfortable sharing both their successes and their failures. They praise and recognize one another's triumphs, and offer empathy and support for each other's troubles" (p. 18). One of the conditions that supports such a culture is the involvement of the teachers in interviewing, selecting, and hiring new teachers. They feel a commitment to their selections and to ensuring the effectiveness of the entire staff.

One goal of reform is to provide appropriate learning environments for students. Teachers, too, need "an environment that values and supports hard work, the acceptance of challenging tasks, risk taking, and the promotion of growth" (Midgley & Wood, 1993, p. 252). Sharing their personal practice contributes to creating such a setting.
Summary of Attributes

Reports in the literature are quite clear about what successful professional learning communities look like and act like. The requirements necessary for such organizational arrangements include:

- the collegial and facilitative participation of the principal, who shares leadership - and thus, power and authority - through inviting staff input in decision making
- a shared vision that is developed from staff's unswerving commitment to students' learning and that is consistently articulated and referenced for the staff's work
- collective learning among staff and application of that learning to solutions that address students' needs
- the visitation and review of each teacher's classroom behavior by peers as a feedback and assistance activity to support individual and community improvement and
- physical conditions and human capacities that support such an operation

Outcomes of Professional Learning Communities for Staff and Students

What difference does it make if staff are communally organized? What results, if any, might be gained from this kind of arrangement? An abbreviated report of staff and student outcomes in schools where staff are engaged together in professional learning communities follows. This report comes from the summary of results included in the literature review noted above (Hord, 1997, p. 27).

For staff, the following results have been observed:

- reduction of isolation of teachers
Building Peer Supported Professional Development

- increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school and increased vigor in working to strengthen the mission
- shared responsibility for the total development of students and collective responsibility for students' success
- powerful learning that defines good teaching and classroom practice and that creates new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learners
- increased meaning and understanding of the content that teachers teach and the roles they play in helping all students achieve expectations
- higher likelihood that teachers will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire students
- more satisfaction, higher morale, and lower rates of absenteeism
- significant advances in adapting teaching to the students, accomplished more quickly than in traditional schools
- commitment to making significant and lasting changes and
- higher likelihood of undertaking fundamental systemic change (p. 27).

For students, the results include:

- decreased dropout rate and fewer classes "skipped"
- lower rates of absenteeism
- increased learning that is distributed more equitably in the smaller high schools
- greater academic gains in math, science, history, and reading than in traditional schools and
- smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds (p. 28).

For more information about these important professional learning community outcomes, please refer to the literature review (Hord, 1997).
In Conclusion

If strong results such as the above are linked to teachers and administrators working in professional learning communities, how might the frequency of such communities in schools be increased? A paradigm shift is needed both by the public and by teachers themselves, about what the role of teacher entails. Many in the public and in the profession believe that the only legitimate use of teachers' time is standing in front of the class, working directly with students. In studies comparing how teachers around the globe spend their time, it is clear that in countries such as Japan, teachers teach fewer classes and use a greater portion of their time to plan, confer with colleagues, work with students individually, visit other classrooms, and engage in other professional development activities (Darling-Hammond, 1994, 1996). Bringing about changes in perspective that will enable the public and the profession to understand and value teachers' professional development will require focused and concerted effort. As Lucianne Carmichael has said, "Teachers are the first learners." Through their participation in a professional learning community, teachers become more effective, and student outcomes increase - a goal upon which we can all agree.
LEADING EDGE:
The best staff development is in the workplace, not in a workshop

By Rick DuFour

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Most schools and districts have created an artificial distinction between working and learning. They operate in a way that suggests teachers work (teach) 180 or so days a year and learn (attend programs) on four or five days each year set aside for professional development. School leaders must end this distinction between working and learning and create conditions that enable staff to grow and learn as part of their daily or weekly work routines.

The traditional notion that regarded staff development as an occasional event that occurred off the school site has gradually given way to the idea that the best staff development happens in the workplace rather than in a workshop. When teachers work together to develop curriculum that delineates the essential knowledge and skills each student is to acquire, when they create frequent common assessments to monitor each student's learning on a timely basis, when they collectively analyze results from those assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses, and when they help each other develop and implement strategies to improve current levels of student learning, they are engaged in the kind of professional development that builds teacher capacity and sustains school improvement.

Job-embedded staff development, by definition, will move the focus of professional learning to the school site. It is
critical, however, that leaders understand that simply shifting to site-based staff development does not ensure improved learning for either adults or students. Site-based staff development can be, and often is, ineffective.

Leaders can increase the likelihood that site-based staff development will enhance the school's capacity to improve student learning if they address four questions.

1. **Does the professional development increase the staff's collective capacity to achieve the school's vision and goals?**

   Schools' tradition of individual teacher autonomy has worsened the traditional approach to staff development. This approach is based on the premise that schools will improve if individual teachers are encouraged to pursue professional growth opportunities that reflect their personal interests. Thus, the goal becomes providing a potpourri of options to reflect the diverse interests of a staff.

   Developing individual teachers' knowledge and skills is important but not sufficient. The challenge facing schools is expanding the ability of a team of teachers to achieve goals for all their students and developing the ability of the entire faculty to move the school toward its vision. Leaders should insist that site-based professional development represent a focused, coherent effort to develop the collective capacity of school personnel to solve problems and sustain continuous improvement.

2. **Does the school's approach to staff development challenge staff members to act in new ways?**

   Effective professional development will do more than help a staff acquire new knowledge and skills. It will push the staff to act in new ways. Teachers in professional learning communities are expected to go beyond reading the same article
from a professional journal or attending the same workshop. They are expected to work together to apply new knowledge in the context of their school. They understand that improving the school means improving the practices of the people within the school.

Therefore, they work together to implement and assess the impact of new strategies for achieving their goals. Building shared knowledge is a critical element in professional development, but shared knowledge will improve schools only when people apply that knowledge. Furthermore, it is only when a staff begins to apply new learning that teachers will come to the deeper level of understanding that enables them to adapt new practices to their own setting.

3. **Does the school's approach to staff development focus on results rather than activities?**

Many schools seem to approach staff development as if there is a prize for presenting the most new programs. When called on to provide evidence of the quality of their site-based staff development initiatives, they point to the number of topics covered, the number of faculty who attended workshops, or the level of satisfaction participants express. The real test of staff development, however, is whether "it alters instructional behavior and practices in ways that benefit students" (Sparks, 1994). Leaders must help schools shift their emphasis from amassing programs and projects to creating a collaborative culture in which teachers work together to improve student learning. Leaders who assess site-based staff development by asking how many teachers have been trained in "whole language" or "constructivist teaching" are asking the wrong question. The best way for leaders to help schools focus on what matters is by asking the question, "What evidence can you provide that staff are helping more students achieve at higher levels?"

4. **Does the school's approach to staff development demonstrate a sustained commitment to achieving important goals?**

One of the challenges of leadership is to bring coherence to the myriad pressures and initiatives bearing down on
schools. Leaders bring coherence to organizations when they establish clear goals, coordinate efforts to achieve those goals, and sustain the effort over an extended period of time. In her study of innovation in the business world, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1983) found one of the most common causes of a failed initiative was that leaders had given up on it too soon. Nearly 20 years later, Jim Collins (2001) arrived at a similar conclusion in his study of successful companies. He found that, inevitably, successful innovation was the result of patient, persistent, sustained effort over time rather than a short-term, groundbreaking program.

The shortness of most staff development programs is the opposite of the kind of sustained commitment needed to embed change within the school's culture. It takes time for a change initiative to take root within the culture of any organization, and until the initiative takes root, it is extremely fragile and subject to regression. Dennis Sparks advises that the key to school improvement is sustained effort over three to five years in which the entire staff seeks incremental annual improvements related to important school goals.

Leaders who hope to foster powerful site-based staff development in their schools may consider these tips:

**Recognize that you will never build a collaborative culture simply by inviting or encouraging staff to work together.** Create structures that require teachers to work together, and build time for that work into the school day and annual calendar. The structures and culture of the school should resonate with the message that collaboration is nondiscretionary; it is the way we do things around here.

**Ensure that teams focus on learning by calling on them to respond to the following questions for every unit of instruction:** What is it we want all students to know and be able to do as a result of this unit? How will we know when each student has demonstrated proficiency? What will we do to address the needs of students who initially have
difficulty mastering the intended learning? If the team’s work does not address these critical questions, there is little reason to anticipate the changes in practice that lead to improved results.

**Insist that every team establish norms** or protocols to clarify their commitments for how they will work together.

**Insist that every team develop** and pursue a student achievement goal that is measurable, attainable, results-oriented, time-bound, and aligned with school and/or district goals.

**Provide every team** with timely, user-friendly, relevant data and information that will allow its members to assess the impact of their various improvement strategies.

**Monitor the teams' work** by reviewing both the products they generate at each step of the process and the progress they make toward their student achievement goals.

**Celebrate the teams' progress** and be prepared to confront teams or individuals who are not honoring this collaborative approach to continuous improvement.

**Solicit feedback from teams** about the resources and training they need to become more proficient in this collaborative process.

It is clear that job-embedded, site-based professional development offers the best venue for educators’ ongoing learning. It is equally clear, however, that leaders can and must play a pivotal role in ensuring that the staff development program of any school is designed to achieve the objective of higher levels of learning for both its adults and its students.
Tipping Point: From Feckless Reform to Substantive Instructional Improvement

Even though we already know the best way to improve instruction, we persist in pursuing strategies that have repeatedly failed. Mr. Schmoker urges us to break free of our addiction to strategic planning and large-scale reform.

By Mike Schmoker

There are simple, proven, affordable structures that exist right now and could have a dramatic, widespread impact on schools and achievement -- in virtually any school. An astonishing level of agreement has emerged on this point. Indeed, Milbrey McLaughlin speaks for a legion of esteemed educators and researchers when she asserts that "the most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community" (emphasis added).1

But here's the problem. Such "learning communities" -- rightly defined -- are still extremely rare.

Short-term versus annual. A number of thinkers have weighed in on the importance of targeted, short-term cycles of improvement. The key is for teams of professionals to achieve and celebrate a continuous succession of small, quick victories in vital areas. Fullan cites John Kotter, who urges us to "generate short-term wins," and Gary Hamel, who exhorts us to "win small, win early, win often."20 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's work speaks directly to the need for people to structure their efforts around clear goals and precise, short-term feedback.21

This is the stuff of commitment and collective "momentum." Kouzes and Posner write of the symbiosis between organizational "momentum and visible signs of success," while for Collins, the "magic of momentum" is a function of
"simple plans" that produce a stream of "visible, tangible results."22

I've seen many examples of teams of teachers who, through short-term trial and error, have found more effective ways to teach certain math applications, reading comprehension skills, difficult physics concepts, or elements of persuasive writing. The cumulative effect of such small, ongoing "wins" is the surest route to annual achievement gains.23

The record is clear that this is how core processes -- in education or industry -- are improved. It is all about short-term team wins, followed by fairly systematic recognition and celebration of each tangible breakthrough (another well-kept secret). Such recognition is still rare in schools, especially at the team level, where it stands to have the most impact.24

The Case for Learning Communities

This model represents a seismic shift -- from annual to short-term. Instead of trying to "reform" a school or system, we should be creating the conditions for teams of teachers to continuously achieve (and receive recognition for) short-term wins in specific instructional areas (e.g., where assessment data indicate that students are struggling). Our plans, our "systemic reform," should focus primarily on establishing and sustaining the structure for just such norms of continuous improvement.

The critique of standard-issue staff development is quite damning, and it is not new. Dennis Sparks, the president of the National Staff Development Council, has been calling for serious changes for years, decrying the fact that "only a small portion of what is known about quality staff development is regularly used in schools." The key is to replace a belief in "'experts' who 'deliver' knowledge of good teaching in workshops" with communities of teachers who learn through "ongoing collaboration and practice."49
For just as long, Bruce Joyce and his colleagues have been telling us that typical staff development "probably will not generate the amount of change necessary to affect student achievement." Instead, they advocate -- along with Sparks, Fullan, and others -- the creation of the kind of "communities of teacher researchers" who engage in focused, recurring cycles of instruction, assessment, and adjustment of instruction.50

For staff development expert Thomas Guskey, the promise of professional development has gone "largely unfulfilled." The solution is staff development built around "collaborative exchange," in which "teachers work together, reflect on their practice, exchange ideas, and share strategies."51

Finally, Richard Stiggins writes that "assessment literacy," so integral to the ongoing improvement of instruction, can be acquired only in "learning teams." "Workshops," he concludes, "will not work." They "do not permit the application of and experimentation with new assessment ideas in real classrooms, and sharing that experience with other colleagues in a team effort."52

We should celebrate such findings. They can turn our attention to what truly works and can liberate us from the unfocused excesses of what critic Peter Temes regards as "wasted effort on a stunning scale by the tens of thousands of people, professionals and parents, dedicating their time, their money, and their spirits to large-scale reform."53

We have invested heavily in such "reform" at the expense of the best-known means by which we might achieve truly historic, wide-scale improvements in teaching and learning -- that is, the structured, empirical work of "learning communities." Let's look more carefully now at the case for this powerful alternative to conventional improvement efforts.

A remarkable concurrence. There is broad, even remarkable, concurrence among members of the research
community on the effects of carefully structured learning teams on the improvement of instruction. Add to this that such structures are probably the most practical, affordable, and professionally dignifying route to better instruction in our schools.

Consider the gravity with which Fullan refers to Judith Warren Little's research: "No words," he writes, "could sum up this discussion of school-level factors [that affect achievement] more accurately than those of Judith Little." He then quotes her as saying, "school improvement is most surely and thoroughly achieved when teachers engage in frequent, continuous and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice . . . adequate to the complexities of teaching, capable of distinguishing one practice and its virtue from another." In this simple but somewhat radical scheme, so different from the elaborate machinations of reform and improvement planning, "teachers and administrators teach each other the practice of teaching" (emphasis in original).54

Fullan continues to quote Little as she describes truly productive teams as those in which teachers rigorously "plan, design, research, evaluate, and prepare teaching materials together." Such simple effort -- teachers teaching one another the practice of teaching -- leads to what has to be one of the most salient lists of benefits in educational literature:

- higher-quality solutions to instructional problems,
- increased confidence among faculty,
- increased ability to support one another's strengths and to accommodate weaknesses,
- more systematic assistance to beginning teachers, and
- the ability to examine an expanded pool of ideas, methods, and materials.

In combination, these elements can't help but produce "remarkable gains in achievement."55
Carl Glickman no less confidently asks the question, "How do teaching and learning improve?" For him, the answer is no mystery. It's as simple as this: I cannot improve my craft in isolation from others. To improve, I must have formats, structures, and plans for reflecting on, changing, and assessing my practice [which] . . . must be continually tested and upgraded with my colleagues.\textsuperscript{56}

Linda Darling-Hammond is struck by how systemic reform promotes overload and incoherence, even as it requires professional teachers to "unthinkingly" implement changes in practice. After all, she argues, there is "no packaged program" that ensures success. But there are, she continues, common "structural features" that promote success in schools. Successful schools allow more professional autonomy, but they also provide accountability through "explicit goals for student learning." The core structure essential to reaching these goals is built around "teaching teams, time for teachers to collaborate and learn together . . . ongoing inquiry as a basis for continual improvement." Best of all, these structures can be established by any leader, and not just the rare individual with "charisma."\textsuperscript{57}

There simply isn't space here to provide the names of all the esteemed educators and organizational experts who advocate explicitly for such collaborative structures and their singular effectiveness. Along with those I've already mentioned, though, a most incomplete list must also include Roland Barth, Louis Castenell, Jim Collins, Lisa Delpit, Karen Eastwood, Richard Elmore, Asa Hilliard, Stephanie Hirsh, Jacqueline Irvine Jordan, Anne Lieberman, Dan Lortie, Robert Marzano, Jay McTighe, Fred Newmann, Allan Odden, Susan Rosenholtz, Seymour Sarason, Tom Peters, Peter Senge, Gary Wehlage, James Stigler, and Grant Wiggins. There are, of course, an avalanche of others.

Thousands of schools and even entire districts can attest to the power of these structures for promoting first incremental and then cumulatively dramatic and enduring improvements in teaching and learning. These schools and districts have made substantive, enduring gains in achievement, largely on the strength of well-structured, goal-oriented
learning teams and communities.

For former superintendent Richard DuFour, whose already high-achieving high school district near Chicago made record gains over an extended period, such goal-oriented "collaborative teams" were "the primary engine of our school improvement efforts."58 In the nearby but less advantaged Chicago Public Schools, those with "strong professional learning communities were four times more likely to be improving academically than schools with weaker professional communities."59 We can no longer afford to be innocent of the fact that "collaboration" improves performance.

**Tipping point.** It is stunning that for all this evidence and consensus of expert opinion, such collaboration -- our most effective tool for improving instruction -- remains exceedingly, dismaying rare. It continues to be crowded out by our persistent but unexamined addiction to complex, over-hyped planning and improvement models. Though such terms as "learning communities" and "lesson study" are heard more than ever, we hardly acknowledge their central importance in actual practice: it is a rare school that has established regular times for teachers to create, test, and refine their lessons and strategies together.

For this to happen, we have to reach a "tipping point," the moment when -- sometimes quite quickly -- people's actions and attitudes change dramatically, and the change spreads like a contagion. Such change typically happens through an energized word-of-mouth campaign.60 Such a tipping point -- from reform to true collaboration -- could represent the most productive shift in the history of educational practice.

And there are plenty of us to get the word out. We will know we have succeeded when the absence of a "strong professional learning community" in a school is an embarrassment and when educators everywhere have great stories to tell about specific, concrete successes that led, cumulatively, to truly systemic success.
The Power of SMART Goals: The 30+ Minute Meeting Series

Meeting #1: Identify the need by isolating the opportunity or gap between what is wanted and the current situation.
- 5 min: Ask: What student learning issues are we struggling with the most?
- 10 min: Brainstorm responses.
- 5 min: Identify top three priorities.
- 10 min: Ask: What more do we need to know? How can we find out?

Between meetings, gather student data and information on priority areas.

Meeting #2: Identify SMART Goals for priority area(s).
- 10 min: Present graphs of student proficiency in area of concern.
- 10 min: Brainstorm results-oriented goals for priority area(s).
- 5 min: Select one results-oriented goal for each area.
- 10 min: Make the results-oriented goal SMART – include indicators, measures, and targets for one goal.
- 5 min: Share SMART goals round robin one at a time.
- 15 min: Have group select “best of” indicators, measures, and targets.
- 10 min: Ask: What do we need to know to affect student learning for this SMART goal.

Between meetings, do literature research or best practice review.

Meeting #3: Correlate best practice to current practice.
- 10 min: Share information gathered between meetings.
- 10 min: Develop matrix: What are we already doing? What else would we like to learn about?
- 10 min: Identify instructional strategies we want to do, do more often, or stop doing.
Between meetings, research way to develop professional knowledge to learn best practice.

**Meeting #4:** *Identify staff development methods we want to use.*

10 min: Share information about various staff development methods.
10 min: Use matrix: individuals select preferred strategy for learning and who may be willing to coach/teach.
15 min: Ask: How will we implement PD? What support do we need? How will we measure progress?

**Between meetings, implement PD and integrate best practice; then gather data to measure against baseline.**

**Meeting #5:** *Analyze results and refocus efforts.*

10 min: Present graphs of new data.
15 min: Discuss what worked, what did not work, and why.
15 min: If the instructional strategy worked well, discuss how to hold the gains.
If the strategy did not work well, decide next steps:
--START doing the strategy differently
--STOP doing the strategy altogether
--START a new strategy

**Start the cycle over again.**

Adapted from *The Power of SMART Goals*, Ann Conzemius
SMART Goals Graphic Organizer

GOAL
Put a results-based goal focused on greatest area of need.

INDICATORS
Evidence we look for to see if the goal is being achieved.
MEASURES

Assessments used to gauge progress.

TARGETS
Establish improvement target for each measure.
Consultancy Protocol

Developed by Gene Thompson-Grove, Paula Evans and Faith Dunne
National School Reform Faculty Project (NSRF)

Purpose: A Consultancy is a structured process for helping an individual or a team think more expansively about a particular, concrete dilemma.

Time: Approximately 50 minutes

Roles:
Presenter (whose work is being discussed by the group)
Facilitator (who sometimes participates, depending on the size of the group)

Steps:
1. The presenter gives an overview of the dilemma with which s/he is struggling, and frames a question for the Consultancy group to consider. The framing of this question, as well as the quality of the presenter’s reflection on the dilemma being discussed, are key features of this protocol. If the presenter has brought student work, educator work, or other “artifacts,” there is a pause here to silently examine the work/documents. The focus of the group’s conversation is on the dilemma. (5-10 minutes)

2. The Consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenter—that is, questions that have brief, factual answers. (5 minutes)

3. The group asks probing questions of the presenter. These questions should be worded so that they help the presenter clarify and expand his/her thinking about the dilemma presented to the Consultancy group. The goal here is for the presenter to learn more about the question s/he framed or to do some analysis of the
dilemma presented. The presenter may respond to the group’s questions, but there is no discussion by the Consultancy group of the presenter’s responses. At the end of the ten minutes, the facilitator asks the presenter to re-state his/her question for the group. (10 minutes)

4. The group talks with each other about the dilemma presented. (15 minutes)
Possible questions to frame the discussion:

What did we hear?
What didn’t we hear that they think might be relevant?
What assumptions seem to be operating?
What questions does the dilemma raise for us?
What do we think about the dilemma?
What might we do or try if faced with a similar dilemma? What have we done in similar situations?

Members of the group sometimes suggest actions the presenter might consider taking. Most often, however, they work to define the issues more thoroughly and objectively. The presenter doesn’t speak during this discussion, but instead listens and takes notes.

5. The presenter reflects on what s/he heard and on what s/he is now thinking, sharing with the group anything that particularly resonated for him or her during any part of the Consultancy. (5 minutes)

6. The facilitator leads a brief conversation about the group’s observation of the Consultancy process. (5 minutes)
Some Tips

**Step 1:** The success of the Consultancy often depends on the quality of the presenter’s reflection in Step 1 as well as on the quality and authenticity of the question framed for the Consultancy group. However, it is not uncommon for the presenter, at the end of a Consultancy, to say, “Now I know what my real question is.” That is fine, too. It is sometimes helpful for the presenter to prepare ahead of time a brief (one-two page) written description of the dilemma and the issues related to it for the Consultancy group to read as part of

**Step 2:** Clarifying questions are for the person asking them. They ask the presenter “who, what, where, when, and how.” These are not “why” questions. They can be answered quickly and succinctly, often with a phrase or two.

**Step 3:** Probing questions are for the person answering them. They ask the presenter “why” (among other things), and are open-ended. They take longer to answer, and often require deep thought on the part of the presenter before s/he speaks.

**Step 4:** When the group talks while the presenter listens, it is helpful for the presenter to pull his/her chair back slightly away from the group. This protocol asks the Consultancy group to talk about the presenter in the third person, almost as if s/he is not there. As awkward as this may feel at first, it often opens up a rich conversation, and it gives the presenter an opportunity to listen and take notes, without having to respond to the group in any way. Remember that it is the group’s job to offer an analysis of the dilemma or question presented. It is not necessary to solve the dilemma or to offer a definitive answer.

It is important for the presenter to listen in a non-defensive manner. Listen for new ideas, perspectives, and approaches. Listen to the group’s analysis of your question/issues. Listen for assumptions—both your own and the group’s—implicit in the conversation. Don't listen for judgment of you by the group. This is not
supposed to be about you, but about a question you have raised. Remember that you asked the group to help you with this dilemma.

**Step 5:** The point of this time period is not for the presenter to give a “blow by blow” response to the group’s conversation, nor is it to defend or further explain. Rather, this is a time for the presenter to talk about what were, for him/her, the most significant comments, ideas and questions s/he heard. The presenter can also share any new thoughts or questions s/he had while listening to the Consultancy group.

**Step 6:** Debriefing the process is key. Don’t short-change this step
Consultancy — Adapted for Examining Student Work

**Time:** At least one hour

**Roles:** Presenter (whose student work is being discussed by the group)
Facilitator (who also participates)

**Steps:**

1. The presenter gives a quick overview of the student work. S/he highlights the major issues or concerns, and frames a question for the consultancy group to consider. The framing of this question, as well as the quality of the presenter's reflection on the student work and related issues, are key features of this protocol. (5 minutes)

2. The group examines the student work. (5 minutes)

3. The consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenter — that is, questions that have brief, factual answers. (5 minutes)

4. The group asks probing questions of the presenter — these questions should be worded so that they help the presenter clarify and expand his or her thinking about the issue or question s/he raised for the consultancy group. The goal here is for the presenter to learn more about the question s/he framed or to do some analysis of the issue s/he presented. The presenter responds to the group’s questions, but there is no discussion by the larger group of the presenter’s responses. (10 minutes)

5. The group talks with each other about the student work and related issues in light of the questions framed for the group by the presenter. What did we hear? What didn’t we hear that we needed to know more about? What do we think about the question and issue(s) presented?
Some groups like to begin the conversation with “warm” feedback—answering questions like: “What are the strengths in this situation or in this student’s work?” or “What’s the good news here?” The group then moves on to cooler feedback—answering questions like: “Where are the gaps?” “What isn’t the presenter considering?” “What do areas for further improvement or investigation seem to be?” Sometimes the group will raise questions for the presenter to consider (“I wonder what would happen if…?” or “I wonder why…?”). The presenter is not allowed to speak during this discussion but instead listens and takes notes. (15 minutes)

6. The presenter responds to what s/he heard (first in a fishbowl if there are several presenters). A whole group discussion might then take place, depending on the time allotted. (10 minutes)

7. The facilitator leads a brief conversation about the group’s observation of the process. (10 minutes)
Feedback Principles

Giving Feedback

Constructive feedback is indispensable to productive collaboration. Positive feedback is easy to give and receive; when the response highlights a need to improve it is harder to say and much harder to hear. When it is done properly, feedback is a very specific kind of communication: it focuses on sharing with another person the impact of their behavior and its purpose is to help that person become more effective. Feedback is most useful when it is audible, credible, and actionable. Following the guidelines below will help you achieve that goal.

Give it with care. To be useful, feedback requires the giver to want to help, not hurt, the other person.

Let the recipient invite it. Feedback is most effective when the receiver has invited the comments. Doing so indicates that the receiver is ready to hear the feedback and gives that person an opportunity to specify areas of interest and concern.

Be specific. Good feedback deals clearly with particular incidents and behavior. Making vague or woolly statements is of little value. The most helpful feedback is concrete and covers the area of interest specified by the receiver.

Include feelings. Effective feedback requires more than a simple statement of observed behaviors. It is important to express how you felt so that the receiver can judge the full impact of the behavior being discussed. For example, you might say, "When you come late to meetings, I feel angry and frustrated because …"
Avoid evaluative judgments. The most useful feedback describes behaviors without value labels such as "irresponsible", "unprofessional", or even "good" and "bad". If the recipient asks you to make a judgment, be sure to state clearly that this is your opinion.

Speak for yourself. When giving feedback, be sure to discuss only things you have witnessed. Do not refer to absent or anonymous people (e.g. "A lot of people didn't like it").

Pick an appropriate time and place. The most useful feedback is given at a time and in a place that make it easy for the receiver to hear it, e.g., away from other people and distractions. It should also be given sufficiently close to the particular event being discussed for the event to be fresh in the mind.

Make the feedback readily actionable. To be most useful, feedback should concern behavior that can be changed by the receiver. Feedback concerning matters outside the control of the receiver is less useful and often causes resentment.

Giving Feedback: Summary

1. Find out and respond to the receiver's concerns.
2. Be specific about the behavior and your reactions.
3. Speak for yourself only.
4. Don't evaluate.
5. Help the receiver figure out how to act on your feedback.

Receiving Feedback

Breathe. This may seem overly simple, but remembering to do it can make a difference. Our bodies are conditioned to react to stressful situations as if they were physical assaults (e.g. muscles tense, breathing becomes shallow and rapid, etc.). Taking full breaths will help your body to relax and your brain to focus.
Specify the behavior about which you want feedback. The more specific you can be about the feedback you want, the more likely you are to be able to act upon it. For example, if you want to know how students reacted to an assignment, ask, "What did the students in the small group you observed do after I finished answering their questions?" rather than, "How did it go?"

Listen carefully. Don't interrupt or discourage the person giving feedback. Don't defend yourself ("It wasn't my fault …") and don't justify ("I only did that because …").

Clarify your understanding of the feedback. You need to get clear feedback in order for it to be helpful. Ask for specific examples, e.g. “Can you describe what I do or say that makes me appear aggressive to you?”

Summarize your understanding of the feedback. Paraphrase the message in your own words to be sure you have heard and understood what was said.

Take time to sort out what you heard. You may need time to think about what was said and how you feel about it or to check with others before responding to the feedback. This is a normal response but should not be used as an excuse to avoid the issue.

Check out possible responses with the person who gave you feedback. A good way to pre-test an alternative approach to a situation that has caused problems for you in the past is to ask the person who gave the feedback if s/he thinks it will be more effective. That provides a first screen, and makes the feedback-giver feel heard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receiving Feedback: Summary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Be specific about the feedback that you want.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Be open to the feedback:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) don't ask for it if you don't want to know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) avoid defensiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) don't justify</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Clarify/check your understanding of the feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Summarize your understanding of the feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Share your reaction to the feedback.</td>
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</tbody>
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The Feed Back Carousel

The purpose of the feed back carousel is to get a variety of different kinds of feedback from a large number of people in a relatively short period of time. We have found the carousel to be particularly effective for getting feedback on a plan for any future work.

To set up this activity, have each person or team display the significant elements of their plan on a piece of chart paper. Encourage the use of color and creativity.

Next to each piece of chart paper, put up another chart paper that is divided into 4 parts. The top left quadrant is for clarifying questions, the top right quadrant is for probing questions, the third quadrant is for recommendations and the fourth quadrant is for resources that would be useful to the planning team.

Distribute small post-its to every participant and ask them to rotate through as many plans as time permits and write feedback on a post-it and place the feed back in the appropriate quadrant.

Allow a few minutes to debrief the process.
Feedback Nightmares

**Purpose:** To address our fears about both getting and giving feedback. To derive a set of principles for a respectful feedback process.

**Time allotted:** From 30 to 40 minutes. If time is tight, cut the writing time.

**The Activity:**
Individual writing—ask everyone to write for 5-10 minutes—about a time when they got feedback and it was a negative experience and about a time that they gave someone feedback and it was a negative experience.

Pairs—share any part of the writing that you are willing to share. Draw up a list of five feedback do’s and five don’ts.

Large group—share out do’s and don’ts—each pair adding to the list. As a group, derive the norms for good feedback that flow from those lists.

**Reflection:**
Why did we focus on negative experiences instead of good ones? Should we have?
Was it difficult writing/sharing about these experiences?
What is the value of an exercise like this?

National School Reform Faculty—adapted by Nancy Mohr
The Final Word

**Purpose:** The purpose of this discussion format is to give each person in the group an opportunity to have their ideas, understandings, and perspective enhanced by hearing from others. With this format, the group can explore an article, clarify their thinking, and have their assumptions and beliefs questioned in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. This version of The Final Word was adapted from the original by Jennifer Fischer-Mueller and Gene Thompson-Grove for NSRF–June, 2002.

**Roles:** Facilitator / timekeeper (who also participates); participants

**Facilitation:** Have participants identify one “most” significant idea from the text (underlined or highlighted ahead of time), stick to the time limits, avoid dialogue, have equal sized circles so all small groups finish at approximately the same time.

**Process:**
- Sit in a circle, and identify a facilitator/time-keeper.
- Each person needs to have one “most” significant idea from the text underlined or highlighted in the article. It is often helpful to identify a “back up” quote as well.
- The first person begins by reading what “struck him or her the most” from the article. Have this person refer to where the quote is in the text - one thought or quote only. Then, in less than 3 minutes, this person describes why that quote struck him or her. For example, why does s/he agree/disagree with the quote, what questions does s/he have about that quote, what issues does it raise for him or her, what does s/he now wonder about in relation to that quote?

- Continuing around the circle each person responds to that quote and what the presenter said, briefly, in less than a
minute. The purpose of the response is:

- to expand on the presenter’s thinking about the quote and the issues raised for him or her by the quote,
- to provide a different look at the quote,
- to clarify the presenter’s thinking about the quote, and/or
- to question the presenter’s assumptions about the quote and the issues raised (although at this time there is no response from the presenter).

• After going around the circle with each person having responded for less than one minute, the person that began has the ‘final word.’ In no more than one minute the presenter responds to what has been said. Now what is s/he thinking? What is his or her reaction to what s/he has heard?

• The next person in the circle then begins by sharing what struck him or her most from the text. Proceed around the circle, responding to this next presenter’s quote in the same way as the first presenter’s. This process continues until each person has had a round with his or her quote.

• For each round, allow about 8 minutes (circles of 5 participants: presenter 3 minutes, response 1 minute for 4 people, final word for presenter 1 minute). The role of the facilitator is to keep the process moving, keep it clear and directed to the article, and keep time so everyone gets an opportunity for a round. Total time is about a forty minutes for a group of 5 (32 minutes for a group of 4, 48 minutes for a group of 6). End by debriefing the process in your small group.
### Focusing on Improvement

Student Name: ___________________ Assessment Title: ___________________ Score: ___________

You may retake any assessment as long as you have completed both parts of this F.O.I form.

Congratulations on taking charge of your own learning! 😊

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Learning Objective</th>
<th>Confident</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Your Thoughts</th>
<th>Right</th>
<th>Wrong</th>
<th>Simple Mistake</th>
<th>Further Study</th>
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</table>
### My Improvement Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths?</th>
<th>What to Improve?</th>
<th>Retake?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My areas of <strong>strength</strong>: (based on the questions I felt <strong>Confident</strong> about AND got <strong>Right</strong>)</td>
<td>In what areas do I need to <strong>improve</strong>? (based on <strong>Unsure, Wrong, or Further Study</strong> questions)</td>
<td>Do I plan on retaking the assessment? (If you check yes, you must fill out the Improvement Plan and Evidence boxes below.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Yes. I will develop an Improvement Plan and will demonstrate my efforts with Evidence. I will complete a Retake Form and schedule a time with my teacher to retake the assessment.**

**No. I did ok. I don’t need to retake it. (Stop here. You do not need to complete the rest of the boxes below. Just sign.)**

### Improvement Plan

**How** do I plan to improve my performance on this assessment? (Don’t just say “study.” Be specific and list the activities are you going to DO.)

- 
- 
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### Evidence

**What evidence** will I give my teacher to show I’ve completed my Improvement Plan? (What printouts, study guides, bookwork, etc???)

- 
- 
- 
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The due date for turning in the Evidence to my teacher is: _____________

Student Signature : ________________________________ Date: ___________
Ed White High School  
House/Team Planning Meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Begin Time:</th>
<th>End Time:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator:</td>
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<td>Counselor:</td>
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<td>Teachers Present:</td>
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**Student Academic: PLC/SLC integration of teaching methods**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student name</th>
<th>Specific Action</th>
<th>Teacher responsible</th>
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**Student Behavior: CHAMPS/Foundations integration into team classroom management**

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<th>Specific Action</th>
<th>Teacher responsible</th>
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**Student Attendance: DCPS attendance policy compliance**

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<th>Student name</th>
<th>Specific Action</th>
<th>Teacher responsible</th>
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<td>Specific Action</td>
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**Concerns of the House/Teams:**

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<tr>
<th>For Administration</th>
<th>For Guidance</th>
<th>For the Community</th>
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**Items needed for next House/Team Planning Meeting:**

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**Questions/Notes:**

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